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# Front and Center

## Making a Difference With Dietary Guidance: From Science to Promotion

**T**he Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion is committed to improving the health of Americans by not only developing dietary guidance that links scientific research to the nutrition needs of consumers but also by promoting that guidance. The nutrition-related research presented in this issue, as well as in other issues, is representative of one of the first steps needed to make a difference in people's overall health. This issue, for example, reports on research that examines factors influencing children's consumption of meals served in the Summer Food Service Program, factors affecting food security among first-time WIC participants, and contributors to food insecurity among rural families. The Center's update on healthful eating, as measured by the Healthy Eating Index, shows that most Americans' diets need to improve.

Continually updating the nutrition science, one of the hallmarks of the USDA, is complemented with reviews of and updates to dietary guidance. The review process for the Dietary Guidelines for Americans is based upon consensus science and results in recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, which consists of leading health and nutrition experts from across the country. This open process, designed and implemented by the USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), uses the latest scientific and medical knowledge as well as national databases to develop guidance for the general public on ways to improve overall health through proper nutrition. Complementary to the review of the Dietary Guidelines is an evaluation and an update of the Food Guide Pyramid, currently referred to as the USDA's food guidance system. One major goal for revising this system is to provide tools that allow consumers to personalize food guidance so that they can live more healthful lifestyles.

Promoting dietary guidance is a major actionable strategy to be used by the USDA and its partners to help Americans make appropriate food choices. After the release of the Dietary Guidelines and the updated food guidance system in early 2005, guidance messages must be promoted effectively through multiple delivery channels to reach various audience segments. It will be through these important promotions that the USDA, in concert with HHS, will continue to build partnerships with the Nation's premier health and nutrition organizations as well as a broad array of nutrition professionals, nutrition educators, academia, and other health organizations to ensure that Americans not only have access to the messages of the Dietary Guidelines and the updated food guidance system but also acquire the ability to use them to make appropriate and long-term changes in their lifestyles.

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